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Why, Lord, did you come to us?

Christmas was different this year... it was the first time any of us has celebrated during a pandemic; that's for sure! While our experience of the celebration was not the same, what we celebrated was the same. What we celebrated answers the question posed above...Why, Lord, did you come to us?

Christmas is not really about the celebration of a birthday. Yes, we celebrate the birth of Christ but it is not so much the historical reality of that birth that is the center of our joy-filled celebrations. It is



God's love is like a river

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what that birth means. What the birth of Christ means is that God loves us! That is why He came to us! He loves us.

It is so simple. But incredibly profound. God is Love, Saint John tells us. That Love that is God is so powerful that it overflows into love of His creation... us! "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (John 3:16).

It's the central mystery of our

Faith: The Incarnation of the Son of God. God who takes on human flesh to save us because of His love for us.

That means that everything we do is centered on this knowledge. We have entered into ordinary time. That means that we live our faith, day by day. It means that we live out the mystery we have celebrated at Christmas, day by day. Since God entered into human existence it means the world is sanctified and we must live out

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This Just In...

Ann Sutherland

Good news from the Vatican. Pope Francis has modified parts of the Code of Canon Law and established that, from now on, the ministries of Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors and Acolytes are to be open to women. Some of us might be surprised to know that this practice has not been done worldwide. It's now a law and has to be adhered to. Good news for our sisters who would like to be more involved in the liturgical celebrations of the church.

More good news for our Founder Servant of God, Bishop Guglielmo Giaquinta, on his way to sainthood. On February 12, Bishop Giaquinta's case will be transferred from his Diocese in Rome to the Vatican. A link will be provided later for those of us who would like to view the process live. We keep praying for a seamless transfer.

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Words from the Founder



Servant of God William Giaquinta

I am appalled at how we have let brutality and violence rule over us. Do we really want destruction or does it come as a consequence of a good sought but not attained?

What good do we want badly enough to suffer for it? I would say three things - the need to develop one's personality, the urge toward brotherhood, and the more or less deliberate work, toward secularity.

Personality – Nowadays, youth believe themselves ready almost at once for anything and claim that the experience their elders required is no longer necessary. On the other hand, older persons do not want to retire while they think they can accomplish something. For these self-reliant proud people, religion that is without substance can make faith appear to be almost magic.

Brotherhood – is an indispensable, vitally important objective for mankind. Today differences of culture, technical development, literacy, jobs, consumption levels, and general well-being are so great that those in need become more desperate, while those who already have a better position tend to further improve it. Either these conditions will be alleviated through mutual fraternity or the extreme disparities will cause our world to explode in one final conflagration. But will a more just world result from violence? The problem is not to convince anyone of the need for brotherhood, but rather to find someone who knows how to achieve it.

Secularity – Many people have almost a hatred for religion, especially the Catholic faith. They blame it for not having prevented our problems and try to keep religion from influencing the future. The world wants to be able to save itself. The present worldly-wise generations consist of supermen who can work technical marvels and generally live in a way our ancestors never would have imagined possible. If we want religion to become a part of life, we must think in terms of the spirituality of others - not only about their hunger and sickness but we must also realize that we are all brothers in our personal relationship of love with God. If we want to save the world, we must convince ourselves and others to love God and neighbor "as I have loved you."

Adapted by Rosemary Darmstadt from "*Love is Revolution*"

In his Encyclical Letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis said...

A worldwide tragedy like the COVID-19 pandemic momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community where one person's problems are the problems of all. Once more we realized that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together. Our daily schedules, projects, habits, and priorities which camouflaged our egos have fallen away and revealed once more the blessed awareness that we are part of one another – brothers and sisters of one another.

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our lives day by day, growing in that holiness — That’s the Pro Sanctity message! That is our Universal Call to Holiness.

Every day is an opportunity for us to grow in holiness. Sometimes God grants us extraordinary ways to do that: taking care of someone who is sick, feeding the hungry, giving to the poor. Most of the time, God gives us little ways to do it: being aware of someone else’s needs, extending a friendly helping hand, praying for someone.

Someone gave me a coffee mug recently. On it there is a quote from Mother Teresa which says: Do small things with great love. The wisdom of the Gospel on a coffee mug!

Why, Lord, did you come to us? To show us how to love and so show us how to be holy!



Rev. Msgr. Steven J. Aguggia
Pro Sanctity Spiritual Advisor
Chancellor of the Diocese of
Brooklyn and Queens
Pastor of St. Pancras

Lenten suggestion

**“Turn off the TV and the cellular and open the BIBLE:
You will hear and feel God closer”**

Pope Francis

FROM THE REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Sisters and Brothers, the year 2020 is over, much to the relief of many of us. However, 2021, began with each of us experiencing our own good news. With that as a promise, let us not look in the rear-view mirror with much regret but examine what lessons we have learned during the trying times we are experiencing. The lessons we learn that help us to grow spiritually, so that this growth manifests itself in our own lives.

Yes, we continue to withstand the stresses of the pandemic. Some of us have lost loved ones, endured economic strife, suffered due to anxiety among other difficulties. In this time of seemingly unending challenges, how have we, Pro Sanctity Associates and Friends, moved to another level in our lives? Recognizing the fact that many of us can be so consumed by adversities which we can’t escape, there are others who realize when we push through, more times than not, we emerge stronger than before.

Some of our members and friends were gracious enough to share how relying on their faith in God has helped them to grow during these times. This response is from someone who lost, in my opinion, too many of her loved ones last year. She said that she is reassured that beautiful things and money do not replace your loved ones. She further stated that when you’re at rock bottom, make the Word of God your fruit. This is such a profound statement from someone who is not embracing bitterness but is opening herself to continuing to grow in faith. Another friend of Pro Sanctity stated that spending more time in prayer and devotion has helped her to grow spiritually in this trying time. The more time we spend in this way, the greater is our disposition which generates a sense of peace. The gift of appreciating others by listening is what someone else expressed as their sense of spiritual growth and yet another is relying on God’s faithfulness when things get hard as they are now. What great gifts and graces and insights! Truly embracing them help us to improve our perspectives, and in turn, help us to reach out to others. Msgr. Aguggia, in this newsletter, reminds us that these perspectives do not have to hit us like a ton of bricks. God gives us little ways to be aware of someone else’s needs, to extend a friendly helping hand and to pray for others.

May God Bless us all as we continue to grow in faith. A popular quote by St. John Paul II for this time goes: “I plead with you. Never ever give up on hope. Never doubt, never tire and never become discouraged. Be not afraid.”

All the best! Dr. Ann Sutherland

Ask Pro Sanctity- How can we show we are thankful for our present situation?

Mona Edwards

Hallelujah! Give thanks to the LORD, who is good, whose mercy endures forever.” (Psalm 106:1). Thankfulness is being aware of the expected or unexpected gifts that we receive or are about to receive throughout the course of our days. As people of God, we have to learn to be grateful for both the struggles and blessings that we face in our daily lives. Our difficult situations should also be seen as gifts from our Lord because it is through them, we are able to grow to have a greater dependency on our Savior.

When we express thankfulness, it helps to bring about a state of positivity which lessens the negativity in our state of being.

Here are a few ways in which we may express our thankfulness in our present time:

Make a daily Thank-you Journal—list the things that went well and list the struggles or challenges of the day.

Say a thank you prayer ---take 5 minutes out of your busy day to reflect and be thankful for your day.

Acknowledge the People around you---by finding creative ways to communicate to them how grateful you are that they are around you.

Make Time with yourself—sit a few minutes with yourself in quiet to appreciate and be grateful for your being. Count your blessings (no matter how insignificant they may be) one by one.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). We are called to be thankful not just in the good times, but in all circumstances.

The Personal Challenge

Nina Riti

The winter newsletter is a composite of articles that are intended to help us traverse the difficult road that we all walked in 2020 and hope 2021 will prove less rocky. Amidst the adversity we were living through Christmas came... Msgr. Aguggia asks the question Why Lord did you come? His response is profound and challenges us to “live out our lives day by day growing in that holiness”. He challenges us to be awake in our daily living and see the many opportunities presented daily to live our lives responding to our individual Call to Holiness.

Being grateful for every day may be difficult during this pandemic but remember this situation is temporary and that it won't last forever because better days are on the way. In Ask Pro Sanctity Mona Edwards gives several ways we can be thankful during this trying time. The challenge is not just to read them once but to incorporate them into your daily life...make them a part of your daily routine and see the difference it will make in your life.

Our Regional Coordinator Ann Sutherland shared the stories of some of our members and how they coped with the adversities they faced. These coping mechanisms may help you face the challenges you are confronted with during this time and remember her quote from St. John Paul II...“never give up on hope”.

Catherine Palermo's article on Blessed Michael McGivney, founder of the Knights of Columbus, is so timely for several reasons...the first being the realization that “life in general was not easy at the time especially for Catholic immigrant families” and the fact that he was a casualty of the Russian Flu Pandemic during that time. Wow, he died in 1890 when he was trying to help immigrants and died during a pandemic. His challenges in 1890 are our challenges today in 2021...in regards to immigrants and the need to survive the Covid-19 pandemic that we are living through and know we WILL meet this challenge.

Lastly I would like to address the challenge before all of us...On Jan. 6 the very spot where President Joe Biden gave his inaugural address and a peaceful transfer of leadership took place in a democratic forum a group of insurrectionists tried and failed to overturn the democratic process. This is perceived by many as a very dark time but the President spoke of unity and healing, recognizing the grief felt by many and instilling hope for a better tomorrow, recalling the devastation of the Civil war while reminding us of the redemptive power of the American way of life that must be available to all. During these dark times let us remember the words of Martin Luther King when he said “Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that, hate cannot drive out hate, only Love can do that.” Isn't that the message that Christ brought us on that first Christmas Day...a message of love, love for one another is easy but the challenge is for us to love all people, allow for difference of opinions, acceptance of each other even if we oppose what they are saying...remember what John 4:20 said...“If anyone says “I love God” but hates his brother, he is a liar” The challenge today is for all to speak the truth by our actions and show by the power of our actions to love and accept all. Listen to each other without interrupting. It is OK to say I hear you but I don't agree. Let's agree to disagree and still see Christ in all we meet.

Don't emphasize what divides us but what unites us but joy comes in the morning.

Our Stories

THE PRO SANCTITY MOVEMENT ANNUAL WEEKEND RETREAT HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED TO

October 22, 23, 24, 2021

Don Bosco Retreat Center, Stony Point, NY

**For registration and information, please call: 347-587-0297 or
917-873-1707, 718-649-0324, 347-330-0707**



RETIRO EN ESPANOL

Octubre : Sabado 2, Domingo 3, 2021

Seminary of Immaculate Conception

440 West Neck Road—Huntington, NY 11743

Lenten Journeys with “Prayer and Reflection”

PS Groups of Brooklyn: Conference call Wednesday to Monday every evening 7:00 pm
Call No. 339-207-8069 / Tuesday call No. 725-735-9898

PS Spanish Groups of Queens: Conference call Monday to Sunday every evening 8:15 pm
Call No. 425-436-6375 pin 706129#

PS Groups of St. Kevin: Study of the PSALMS ON DVD by Jeff Cavins
Every Monday at 7:00 pm
Every Friday at 10:30 am

For information please call 917-873-1707, 718-649-0324, 917-683-4670, 714-309-6651

Pope Francis' Letter continued from page 1

The brutal and unforeseen blow of this uncontrolled pandemic forced us to recover our concern for everyone, rather than for the benefit of a few. Today we can recognize that we were consumers of distraction, insularity, and solitude. We gorged ourselves on networking and lost the taste of fraternity. Prisoners of a virtual reality, we lost the taste and flavor of what was real. The pain, uncertainty, and fear have made it more urgent that we rethink our lifestyles, our relationships, the organization of our society, and above all, the meaning of our existence.

If we forget all too quickly the lessons of history, once this health crisis passes, our worst response would be to plunge even more deeply into feverish consumerism and new forms of egoistic self-preservation. May this not be just another tragedy of history from which we learned nothing, but a meaningful lesson that teaches us to think no longer in terms of "them" as separate from us, but of all of "us" as one.

Keep in mind all those elderly persons who died for lack of respirators. Unless we create a community of belonging and solidarity worthy of our time, energy and resources, the illusion that we are all one will collapse. Above all, when few people are capable of maintaining a consumerist lifestyle, violence and mutual destruction soon follow. The notion of "every man for himself" soon degenerates into a free-for-all that would prove worse than any pandemic.

Despite these dark clouds, there are many signs of hope. God continues to sow abundant seeds of goodness in our human family. The pandemic enabled us to recognize those around us, who in the midst of fear, responded by putting their own lives at risk. And thus, we realized that our lives are interwoven and sustained by ordinary people who valiantly shaped the decisive events of our shared history because they understood that no one is saved alone.

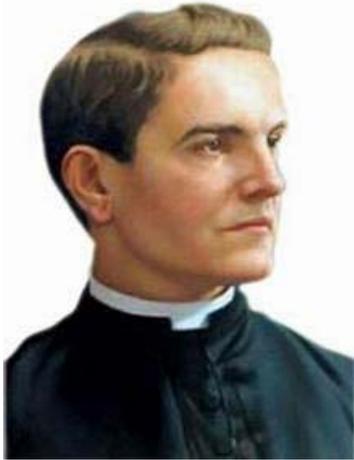
Excerpted by Rosemary Darmstadt

Our Models ...

Saints for Our Times

Compiled by

Catherine
Palermo-Sakowski



Fr. Michael Joseph McGivney An American Blessed

Michael Joseph McGivney was born in Waterbury, Connecticut on August 12, 1852. He was the first of 13 children, six of whom died in childhood. His parents were Irish immigrants and devout Catholics who nurtured Michael's faith.

In 1868, at the age of 16, Michael left home to pursue God's call to the priesthood and entered the Seminaire de Saint-Hyacinth in Quebec, Canada. In 1873, after the death of his father, he returned home to help support his mother and siblings. He later resumed his studies in Baltimore, Maryland and on Dec 22, 1877 he was ordained a priest. As assistant pastor at St. Mary's Church in New Haven, CT he worked tirelessly among parishioners to increase their faith. His focus was on making the Church the center of community life.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Fr. McGivney is best known as the founder of the Knights of Columbus. Life in general was not easy at the time especially for Catholic immigrant families who often faced prejudice, social exclusion and financial disadvantages. From his own experience he recognized the devastating effect on im-

migrant families, including the separation of families, when the father and breadwinner dies. This led him to the founding of The Knights of Columbus on March 29, 1882.

The main purpose of his new fraternity was to provide Catholic men with an alternative to anti-Catholic secret societies that offered social and employment advances but drew them away from the faith.

His second goal was to unite men of Catholic faith so they could help each other and also provide financial and spiritual assistance to the families of deceased members. Today the Knights of Columbus is one the world's leading fraternal and service organizations with two million members.

Fr McGivney died in 1890 at the age of 38. His death was attributed to pneumonia caused by a Russian Flu Pandemic. How appropriate that his Beatification comes when the world is reeling from our own Covid-19 Pandemic

SERVANT OF GOD

On Dec 18, 1997 Mc Givney's cause for sainthood officially opened in Hartford. On March 15, 2008 confirming Fr. McGivney's heroic virtue, Pope Benedict XVI declared him a "Venerable Servant of God". The decree states, in part, "Concerning the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Love both toward God and neighbor... they existed to a heroic degree in the Servant of God Michael McGivney, Diocesan Priest and Founder of the Fraternal Order the Knights of Columbus."

MIRACLE FOR "MIKEY"

As of August 6, 2013 a miracle attributed to McGivney's intercession was under investigation at the Vatican. That miracle involved the healing of Michael Schachle, now five years old, in Dixon, Tennessee. While *in utero*, an ultrasound showed that "mikey" suffered from a grave disease of fetal hydrops. The

fetus was not expected to survive and his parents were advised to abort. However, the parents had a long-standing devotion to Fr. McGivney and the child's father served as a member of the Knights of Columbus. Filled with faith, the couple made a pilgrimage to Rome where they prayed for Fr McGivney's intercession promising to name the child after him. When they returned home the follow-up tests showed the condition was gone. After an extensive process of medical and theological reviews, on May 27, 2020, Pope Francis approved the decree for the miracle opening the way for the beatification.

BEATIFICATION

On October 31, 2020, the beatification mass was celebrated at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford, CT. He is now one step away from sainthood.

Father McGivney has inspired generations of Catholic men to roll up their sleeves and put faith into action. He was decades ahead of his time in giving the laity an important role within the Church and remains an important role model for parish priests with his transformative legacy of effective cooperation between the laity and clergy.



Comedy Corner

Whose idea was it to sing Happy Birthday while washing your hands? Now every time I go to the bathroom my kids expect me to walk out with a cake!

...Come and Grow with us

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME

Jean Taylor

In 1974 Bishop Giaquinta told us about building a world of spiritual fraternity and universal brotherhood. He said that the call to holiness was the call to love God and others, that God loved us, and the reason for his conclusions are summarized in these two commandments. "You shall love the Lord with all your heart with all your soul and with all your mind, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Back in 1974, Bishop Giaquinta saw the world as lacking love in relationships, social interactions, cultural activities, entertainments, communications, developing technologies, and even religious traditions, and much more. He preached that it was time for the witness and message of love to be proclaimed. He said that talking and brotherly solidarity were useless if we did not transform words into action. He encouraged us to welcome each person as a sister or brother and to live our Christianity deeply, authentically, and with the spiritual brotherhood and universal love that becomes the characteristic elements of one's life. **"All Saints, All Brothers and Sisters."** Bishop Giaquinta went on to say that we cannot wait until society becomes more humane to restore genuine love to daily life.



Pope Francis, in 2020 wrote *Fratelli Tutti*, which he termed a Social Encyclical, warns that we should lead the way of life proposed in the Gospels. Not by waging wars in words and imposing doctrines, but simply by loving each other. The goal of the Encyclical is to promote a vision of universal fraternity and social friendship.

The pontiff observes that we are brothers and sisters because we are all children of one creator. We inhabit the same planet, each having his or her own beliefs and convictions, which should make for a richer world. We belong to this human family. In this world where things are intertwined, we can be saved only if we work together. Fraternity is to be encouraged in words and deeds acknowledging the dignity of each human person. To this end, Pope Francis proposes a different kind of politics instead of the kind we are used to: (1) *Politics geared to serving the common good and not just to financial interest.* (2) *Politics removed from populism and aimed at preserving fundamental rights.* These changes, based on truth and justice, will promote peace, eliminate the plight of hunger, and end human trafficking. Pope Francis also spoke of the manipulation and deformation of concepts like democracy, freedom, justice, selfishness, indifference to the common good, and the deterioration of ethics. He noted that global problems require global actions. Pope Francis ended this despondent discourse with a ray of hope, stating that **we need to love one another with the love that builds bridges**, giving the good Samaritan as an example. **We are all called to be good neighbors.**





THE SEASON OF *Lent*

PRAY FAST GIVE

February
17th
Ash
Wednesday



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The Pro Sanctity Movement is a Catholic Organization dedicated to promoting the Universal Call to Holiness by seeking to address the needs of the mind with theology, the heart with spirituality, and the hands with ministry.

Feast of Our Lady of Trust

Eucharistic Adoration /Marian Hour

Has been RESCHEDULED TO

Sunday, May 2, 2021 at 3:30 p.m.

**45th Avenue & 195th Street
Flushing, NY 11358**

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**The Pro Sanctity Spanish Annual Weekend Retreat**

**has been RESCHEDULED  
October 22, 23, 24, 2021**

**Details will follow**